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Israeli troops kill three more Palestinians

Police detain senior aide to Netanyahu

CAIRO: Israeli troops, violating ceasefire with Hamas, killed at least three Palestinians in two separate incidents across the enclave, local health authorities said.

Medics said one Palestinian was killed in the Tuffah neighbourhood in Gaza City, in an area under Palestinian control, while two others were killed in the town of Bani Suhaila east of Khan Younis, an area Israel still occupies.

There was no comment from the Israeli military on the two incidents.

Fighting has largely abated since Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire in October, two years into the war, but it has not stopped entirely.

A Hamas official said on Sunday that the group has urged mediators to intervene to stop "daily Israeli killings that aim to derail the ceasefire deal". More than 440 Palestinians, most of them civilians, have been killed since the truce was announced.

Netanyahu aide detained

Israeli police said on Sunday they detained a senior aide to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suspected of obstructing an investigation, with local media reporting that it was tied to leaks of military information during the war on Gaza.

Police did not name the individual, but Israeli media reported it was Tzachi Braverman, Netanyahu's current chief of staff, who is designated to be Israel's next ambassador to the UK.

"This morning, a senior official in the prime minister's office was detained for questioning... on suspicion of obstructing an investigation," the police said.

"The suspect... is currently being questioned under caution." Former Netanyahu aide Eli Feldstein recently alleged that Braverman tried to obstruct an investigation into a leak of sensitive military information to the foreign press during the war against Hamas in Gaza.

In September 2024, Feldstein leaked a classified document from the Israeli military to the German tabloid *Bild*, for which he was later arrested and indicted.

The document aimed to prove that Hamas was not interested in a ceasefire deal, and to support Netanyahu's claim that the Israeli prisoners detained by Hamas could only be released through military pressure instead of negotiations.

In an interview with Israel's broadcaster *KAN*, Feldstein said Braverman asked to meet him after the leak.

Braverman informed him that the army had launched a probe into the affair, and said he could "shut down" the investigation, according to Feldstein.

In the same interview, Feldstein said Netanyahu was aware of the leak and was in favour of using the document to drum up public support for the war.

Israeli media reported that police also searched Braverman's home on Sunday, and that Feldstein was expected to speak with police later regarding Braverman's suspected involvement in the affair.

Feldstein is also a suspect in the so-called "Qatargate" scandal, in which he and other associates of Netanyahu are suspected of having been recruited by Qatar.

Samoa to open embassy in Jerusalem

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said on Sunday that Samoa will open an embassy in Jerusalem this year, a rare move as most foreign diplomatic missions to Israel are located in Tel Aviv.

Samoa will become the eighth country to open its mission in Jerusalem, and the third from the Pacific region after Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. — Agencies

A UN vehicle drives past the destroyed UNRWA headquarters, in Gaza City on Sunday. With the area's displaced families living in tented camps, serious concerns have been raised over their living conditions.—AFP

Opposition leader's appointment awaited as NA session summoned

By Our Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned the National Assembly session on Monday (today), setting the stage to initiate the process of appointing the leader of the opposition.

The opposition leader issue is expected to resurface after PTI's Omar Ayub withdrew his petitions in the Supreme Court and high courts against his removal.

Before the petition was withdrawn, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq said he couldn't begin the appointment process as the issue was sub judice.

With the summoning of the assembly, Speaker Sadiq is expected to ask the opposition to follow the process for appointing a new leader.

The opposition has repeatedly accused the government of delaying the appointment process and nominated Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chief Mehmood Achakzai as the opposition leader.

Rule 39 of the "Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly 2007" confirms it is the sole prerogative of the speaker to ask the opposition at any time to submit a name, after which the opposition may present it.

However, the opposition has already submitted the name of Achakzai to the speaker's office rather than presenting it to the speaker personally.

The rule also states the speaker must verify the signatures of all opposition members voting in favour of the candidate.

Rule 39, titled "Declaration of Leader of the Opposition," states that after each general election — and at any time thereafter — the National Assembly speaker must declare the opposition leader as soon as possible following the election of the prime minister.

Afridi, ex-ministers identified in Radio Pakistan attack clips

• Punjab forensic report calls videos genuine, profile photos matched • PTI leaders say clips unrelated to case; Azma terms evidence 'irrefutable'

By Waseem Ahmad Shah

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi has found himself in the centre of a legal controversy after a forensic report, submitted by the prosecution to the anti-terrorism court in the Radio Pakistan attack case, identified him as one of the suspects seen in the purported video clips of the incident. The report prepared by the Punjab Forensic Science Agency (PFSA) is based on the footage of the ransacking of the Radio Pakistan office in Peshawar after the arrest of ex-prime minister Imran Khan in May 2023. Last month, the court ordered that the clips be sent for examination and a report be submitted. At the time, the defence had not questioned the relevance or the legitimacy of the footage.

The authorities had provided the video clips and the pictures of CM Afridi, former provincial ministers Taimur Saleem Jhagra and Kamran Bangash, and two other PTI leaders, Irfan Saleem and Amir Khan Chamkani, for analysis. None of them had been nominated in the case.

In the report, the PFSA gave its opinion on two points: whether the videos in the USB were genuine and whether the persons whose profile pictures had been shared appeared in the clips. It said the five individuals, including the CM, were seen in the clips, but did not clarify if the videos were related to the Radio Pakistan attack or any other event. It, however, said the clips were not edited except for the merger of multiple video clips of different camera views.

A legal expert, privy to the case, said the investigating officer, after this 'evidence' could nominate more accused through a supplementary report to the ATC. However, the court can also take cognisance of the matter. Similarly, the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) could also submit an application for the inclusion of the accused persons in light of the forensic report.

'Unrelated clips'

Soon after the details of the report went viral on social media, several PTI leaders stated that these clips didn't show the Radio Pakistan occurrence, which took place on May 10, 2023, after PTI founder Imran Khan was arrested in Islamabad.

PTI leader Taimur Jhagra said it was interesting that this campaign was against the CM and other individuals never nominated in this case. "The posts with screenshots are very interesting because they have nothing to do with Radio Pakistan. I believe the Punjab lab is simply commenting on whether it thinks the videos are genuine or not. My first video screenshot is of a video that is not even shot in Peshawar… The video is of my condemnation of Imran Khan's arrest on May 9, while in Islamabad," he mentioned.

The ATC has fixed Jan 26 for the next hearing in the trial.

The ATC is conducting the trial, with 75 accused, including some present and former lawmakers, being indicted on June 3, 2025, on multiple counts. The FIR was registered at the East Cantonment police station on May 10, 2023.

'Irrefutable evidence'

Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari said that the incidents involving arson attacks on Radio Pakistan and toll plazas by the PTI in Peshawar were part of a well-planned conspiracy, and "irrefutable evidence" has surfaced in the forensic report.

Ms Bokhari said the report included a complete forensic analysis of the Peshawar incidents, supported by videos and photographic evidence. She stated that all this evidence was admissible in any court of law, and those involved in rioting would be brought to justice.

Amjad Mahmood in Lahore also contributed to this report

ADB warns $360m loan for highway project risks lapsing

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has expressed concern that a $360 million (Rs108 billion) loan earmarked for the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Corridor (Carec) Development Investment Programme's Tranche III could lapse next year without project's completion.

The significant delay in utilising the loan is mainly due to the failure of the Tranche III road project to begin, resulting from controversies in the bidding process discussed in five parliamentary standing committee meetings.

Without immediate acceleration by the National Highway Authority (NHA), the funds will expire without the completion of the Tranche-III road project, which involves widening sections of the N55 Highway.

In a letter seen by *Dawn*, the ADB warned the economic affairs division that based on current progress, there was a significant risk the approved $360m under the Multi-tranche Financing Facility (MFF) would not be fully utilised by the expiration date of Dec 31, 2027.

The project has been stalled for eight months following controversies surrounding the bidding process.

Although bids were opened in February 2025 and approved by the ADB shortly thereafter, the process faced scrutiny from five parliamentary panels and Public Procurement Regulatory Authority.

Despite the administrative hurdles, the Islamabad High Court recently ordered that work be awarded without further delay. The court noted that continued stalling could result in loan cancellation, cost escalation and "serious reputational damage" to the national exchequer.

The total of the project cost is estimated at Rs170bn, which includes land acquisition, consultancy and taxes while the lowest bid received by the NHA for the project was of Rs147 billion.

The ADB covers Rs108bn of the total, with the government of Pakistan funding the remaining balance.

Officials indicate the NHA is in a difficult position regarding fund utilisation. Rebidding is considered unfeasible, as obtaining new approvals from the ADB and Ecnec would take more time, while the ADB stressed that its 2027 deadline is "firm, with no possibility of extension".

"We seek EAD's support in assisting NHA to expedite implementation, complete pending procurements, and ensure full utilisation of the loan proceeds within the MFF period," the ADB stated.

The Ecnec has approved the bids from a joint venture comprising NXCC, Dynamic Constructor and Rustam Associates even though parliamentary committees and the PPRA expressed concerns.

The NHA defended the choice, stating that allegations of non-performance against the lead partner "did not reach finality in accordance with the procedure and rules", and the firm was never blacklisted by any agency.

The ADB confirmed it has no objection to awarding the contracts to the lowest evaluated bidder across four specific lots:

Lot 1: Rajanpur to Jampur (57.5km) for Rs23.5bn; Lot 2: Jampur to Dera Ghazi Khan (64km) for Rs29.1bn; Lot 3: Dera Ghazi Khan to Tibi Qaisrani (111.7km) for Rs52bn; Lot 4: Tibi Qaisrani to Dera Ismail Khan (96.2km) for Rs42bn.

IHC rejected PPRA's petition on the Rs172bn Carec Tranch-III award to JV. In its verdict, the court warned that the regulator's recent decisions "may also lead to the refusal of the finance facility agreed by the ADB," and declared the petitions infructuous.

IPP demands 16 smaller provinces in place of four

Parties must show magnanimity to back the proposal: Aleem

By Amjad Mahmood

LAHORE: President of the Istehkam Pakistan Party (IPP) and Federal Communications Minister Abdul Aleem Khan has urged political parties to show magnanimity and accept the need for smaller provinces to facilitate the people at their doorsteps.

Speaking at a party workers' convention at Kamoke, around 50km from Lahore, he said that the IPP has launched a movement for creation of smaller provinces as an immediate and sustainable solution to problems of people living in far-flung areas.

"We will not change the names of provinces; new provinces should be created like in Punjab as North, South, West, and East Punjab. For this purpose, political parties must rise above narrow-mindedness and show magnanimity as it is in everyone's own interest," he said.

Welcoming support from MQM and other political parties for the proposal of new provinces, he said this would save people's time and energy and allow their issues to be resolved closer to their doorstep.

He said that not only Punjab, but Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should also be divided into four provinces each with a new name.

The IPP leader announced linking cities of Kamoke and Gujranwala with the Lahore-Sialkot-Kharian Motorway which will provide these cities access to Islamabad via the Motorway network.

He also announced widening of this Motorway from four to six lanes which will benefit Gujranwala division in general and Kamoke city in particular.

The minister said that the prime minister would be invited to Kamoke and Gujranwala to inaugurate the link Motorway. He said the communications department has carried out important development works in Kamoke, including U-turns and that further projects will be added in future.

He demanded fixing of the minimum price of wheat for farmers at Rs4,000 per maund. He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif should take personal interest in reducing tax rates for the business community so that wheels of industry can move faster.

He said the youth are our future and providing them with dignified employment is our national responsibility. If all-round development takes place, jobs will be created for the youth through the private sector for which business activities must be accelerated.

The minister also praised the leadership of the Pakistan armed forces for humbling the enemy and earning global respect for the country.

Healthcare workers, officials slam Punjab's wearable cams plan

• Concerns raised over patient confidentiality • Medics say decision taken without stakeholders' consultation • PMA calls move 'ill-conceived, impractical'

Dawn Report

LAHORE / KARACHI: Healthcare workers and officials have raised concern over the Punjab government's decision to make body cameras mandatory for hospital staff, warning that the move was taken without consultation and could infringe patients' rights to privacy and dignity.

Body-worn cameras, or bodycams, are wearable audio and video recording devices used to capture footage of official actions. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Friday announced that bodycams would be made mandatory for nurses, ward staff, security guards and pharmacy personnel — excluding doctors — after complaints about the behaviour and alleged negligence of hospital staff.

Last month, Lahore's Nishtar Hospital sacked a doctor working as an additional house officer for misbehaving with a patient's family, a video of which had gone viral on social media. An inquiry committee was also formed to probe the incident.

Officials have taken strong exception to the move, terming it "ill-conceived" and a direct violation of patients' fundamental rights.

"This is unbelievable. If at all this is decided and practically applied, it will not be a useful technique to improve the health delivery system," Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) President Dr Izhar Ahmed Chaudhry told *Dawn*. "It will bounce back and give a bad name to the government."

He maintained the government had not consulted anyone or any forum at any level and termed the decision "illogical, impractical and insane," which was "against fundamental rights of patients as well as the health professionals".

"It violates essential privacy of patients and professional liberty and confidentiality of the health professionals during treatment, which is mandatory and cannot be violated under the law," he added.

In Dr Chaudhry's view, instead of taking measures to improve the current deteriorating conditions in the health sector and make it free for all, the government was creating situations and endangering lives and the very existence of health professionals.

He said that the government decided "to sell out the health institutions and deliberately make the working conditions miserable with each passing day".

For Young Doctors Association (YDA) Punjab President Dr Shoaib Niazi, the decision was a "useless act" for which the association was "not consulted". "I was not consulted at all. This decision came from the higher-ups, and it's a useless act," he said, adding that similar decisions, such as a prohibition on the use of mobile phones on duty, were imposed on hospital staff, but they were not implemented.

"This move will compromise patient privacy and confidentiality, for example, in the gynaecology and labour wards. Moreover, the footage will go to the IT department, and anyone can access it without patients' consent," Dr Niazi said.

Raising questions on the source of funding for the bodycams, Mr Niazi said the "security guards have not been paid salaries for the last three months in Mayo Hospital. How will the government provide bodycams? How will they implement such a structure? Where will the money come from?"

He further said that there would be no "honest opinion" because of body cameras, adding that the government had taken the decision without consulting him, and it was expected that the next step would be to make bodycams mandatory for doctors.

The YDA Punjab president said he would hold a press conference related to the issue soon, and he would speak in detail about it.

According to the Punjab Young Nurses Association Member and a staffer at Children's Hospital Lahore, Muqaddas Tasneem, nurses were a major stakeholder in the decision, but none of them were consulted.

"The govt didn't consult us at all and decided on its own. However, we have to follow the orders and act upon the directions," she said.

Junaid Tariq, president of Allied Health Sciences at Lahore General Hospital, representing ward staff and other allied workers, said his group was neither informed nor consulted.

"We are unable to understand the purpose of this order. It fits in with the responsibilities of security guards, but it will compromise the privacy of patients. It will compromise the confidentiality of patients' medical records. The nature of our work does not relate to security," he said.

'Inconceivable decision'

Speaking to *Dawn*, former Punjab caretaker minister for health, Dr Javed Akram, said he did not have any knowledge of the decision, saying it was "not possible that something like this will happen, as it was inconceivable. How will they do it to so many people?"

Dr Akram raised multiple questions on the practical aspect of the decision: "How will they watch or analyse those (healthcare officials) with bodycams? What if the employees with cams have to go to the restrooms? Will they take the cam off each time?"

Imran Gabol in Lahore also contributed to this report

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